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ABSTRACT

An exercise is presented that is designed as a training aid for junior administrative and/or academic staff in their first 6 years of service in universities. It is intended to help participants think about management principles in general while trying cut their own ideas for solving the specific problems outlined. It will also permit individuals to try alternative roles. The exercise provides a basic framework for including sub-exercises specifically related to an institution or group of institutions. Principles rather than particular situations are emphasized. The exercise may be carried out in three stages: individual response, group discussions, and plenary session. Situations at the University of Barset are used as study examples or "in-basket" exercises. Among the issues are the following: advertising of undergraduate courses, classifying higher degree results, student membership on senate and council committees, and the semi-independent status of the Business School. A description is provided of the university and its locale, and current problems are outlined. Correspondence and proposals detailing the administrative situations are included. (SW)

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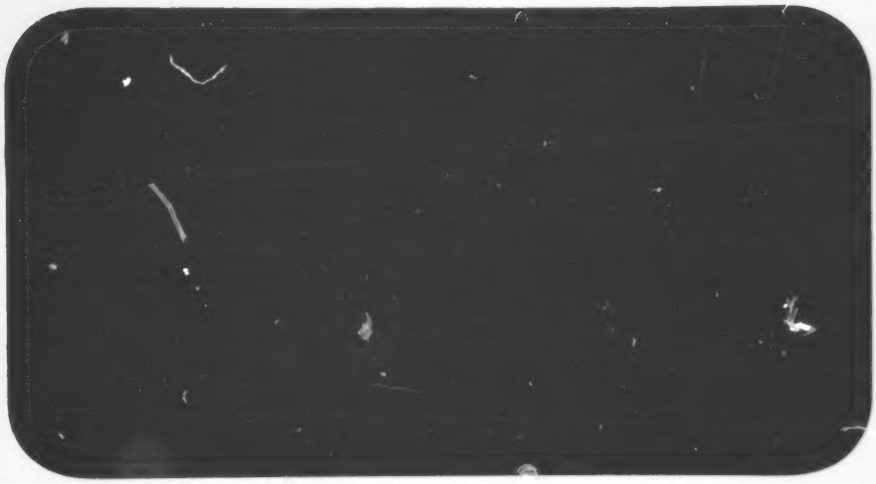
SDU
Staff Development in Universities programme

University of London Institute of Education



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UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

In-Basket Exercise

Organiser's Copy

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Programme for Staff Development in Universities
University of London Institute of Education

Programme Organisers: David Warren Piper and Ron Glatter

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

In-Basket Exercise
Notes for Organisers

INTRODUCTION

General

The exercise, in its present form, is designed as a training aid for junior administrative and/or academic staff in their first six years of service in Universities. It is intended to stir the imagination of the participants in such a way as to help them think about management principles in general, while trying out their own ideas for solving the specific problems outlined in the 'in-basket' items. It will also permit individuals to try their hand at alternative roles.

Organisers are asked to note that the material provided is not intended to be fully comprehensive. The aim of such an exercise as this is to provide a basic framework on to which can be grafted further sub-exercises specifically related to an institution or group of institutions. It will be found for instance that when the exercise as given is run, questions will inevitably be raised about the mythical institution described and the problems raised by the correspondence presented, the answers to which will serve to flesh out the bare bones of the structure of the University of Barset. It is also expected that organisers will be able to build in after each exercise further sample letters and queries so that the scope of this training aid can be regarded as ever expanding. The present selection of correspondence seeks answers to points of general principle such as might fall to senior administrators and academics at any time. When the game is played in different institutions, however, it may be found advisable to add further letters either on the same general basis or aimed at specific areas of interest or skills.

Incidentally it will be found that players of this exercise will relate their responses to their own institution and it will probably be as well to make it clear from the very start that as far as possible participants should divorce themselves from their own institution and give 'ideal' responses to the problems presented.

SUGGESTED RULES

(i) The organisers should begin by outlining the points made in the previous section and should then assign roles to individuals or groups of participants (if this is thought desirable).

(ii) It is suggested that the exercise should consist of three stages and that as a whole it should not exceed two hours. The stages are:-

(1) Individual Response

Participants consider the items and the management issues raised, and prepare up to three responses (which should be written down) to each item. If a response involves making a telephone call or writing a letter, the content of this should be indicated.

(Guide - Not more than ¾ hr.)

(2) Group Discussions

Participants assemble into previously arranged groups; individual responses to the in-basket items and the personal reasons for them are laid before the group for comments and discussion. The group attempts to draw out general management principles in relation to each item.

(Guide - Not more than ¾ hr.)

(3) Plenary Session

The groups put before each other any general management principles which may have been highlighted in stage (2) and discuss the exercise as a whole.

In connection with stage (3) organisers may find the notes set out below of use:-

Management guidance for this exercise might centre on the following issues:

A. What is the University's approach to the subject of advertising undergraduate courses (other then new ones)?

B. What are the arguments for and against classifying higher degree results?

C. What advantages, if any, are there in retaining the existence of 'reserved areas', given that at Barset students are entitled to membership of all Senate and Council Committees?

D. If this objection is justified, what light does it throw on the problem of ensuring adequate consultation with the Business School? Is it really feasible to permit the School to continue its present semi-independent status? If so, how can existing ties be strengthened?

E. Is the Vice-Chancellor's comment a fair one? How far should minutes reflect views of individuals in detail? What are minutes for?

F. What information, if any, should the University give to outside bodies about its students?

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University of London Institute of Education

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C.

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET
'In-Basket' Exercise

Management guidance for this exercise might centre on the following issues:

A. What is the University's approach to the subject of advertising undergraduate courses (other than new ones)?

B. What are the arguments for and against classifying higher degree results?

C. What advantages, if any, are there in retaining the existence of 'reserved areas', given that at Barset students are entitled to membership of all Senate and Council Committees?

D. If this objection is justified, what light does it throw on the problem of ensuring adequate consultation with the Business School? Is it really feasible to permit the School to continue its present semi-independent status? If so, how can existing ties be strengthened?

E. Is the Vice-Chancellor's comment a fair one? How far should minutes reflect views of individuals in detail? What are minutes for?

F. What information, if any, should the University give to outside bodies about its students?

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UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

In-Basket Exercise

Introduction for Participants

This exercise is designed to help you think about some general management principles pertinent to university administration. You are asked to imagine the University of Barset at work, and invited to try out some of your own ideas for solving some specific problems outlined in the 'in-basket' items. The present selection of items seeks answers and points of general principle such as may fall to senior administrators and academics at any time.

As the exercise proceeds you, along with the other participants, will be able to flesh out the bare bones of the 'University of Barset' by discussion. You will need to build up a common picture of the organisation and the work of the University. The more realistic this is the better, although it is important not to get bogged down trying to reproduce the procedural peculiarities of your own university (especially when you are doing the exercise with people from other universities). The important thing is to concentrate on the principles.

Notes to Participants

It is suggested that the exercise should consist of three stages, and that as a whole it should not exceed twohours. The stages are

(1) Individual Response

Participants consider the items and the management issues raised, and prepare up to three responses (which should be written down) to each item. If a response involves making a telephone call or writing a letter, the content of this should be indicated.

(Guide - Not more than ¾ hr.)

(2) Group Discussions

Participants assemble into previously arranged groups; individual responses to the in-basket items and the personal reasons for them are laid before the group for comments and discussion. The group attempts to draw out general management principles in relation to each item.

(Guide - Not more than ¾ hr.)

(3) Plenary Session

The groups put before each other any general management principles which may have been highlighted in stage (2), and discuss the exercise as a whole.

Participants are recommended to identify their group before the start of stage (1) in order to plan their timing accordingly.

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UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

The University of Barset was founded in 1959 and developed from a University College giving External Degrees of the University of London.

Barsetshire is somewhere West of Hampshire and the City of Barset is on a direct rail line to both London and Bristol with a good road access to the M4 and M6. It is on the coast with limited port facilities.

The City was originally a market town, but during the railway age it became a centre for carriage works and engine repairs. It has in consequence been suffering heavy unemployment following British Rail closures. This has been countered in part by Government support for light industry on the new industrial estate. Industries which have so far been attracted are specialised and therefore do not provide work for semi-skilled and unskilled parts of the labour force. There is a hope, however, that the new Japanese firm which is establishing a base for making gear for North Sea oil rigs and pipe lines will have an impact on this front. The advent of senior executives for this firm is already having a serious effect on house prices in the area.

The University campus is on the edge of the City in an area designated for University development by the then Ministry of Housing in 1962. The campus site is close to the docks and consists of a limited amount of open space most of which has now been used for Academic Buildings and some poor but usable housing of mid-Victorian era. There is in addition a country estate on the edge of the green belt to the North of the City which has been bequeathed to the University and which the Bursar would like to use for the loan financed residence if planning permission can be obtained. The University has a student population of 5,000 at present which is scheduled to go to 7,000 by 1976/77.

In addition to the University there is a large Polytechnic which has a site near the City Centre and which is rapidly developing a number of degree courses in the Arts and Social Sciences as well as in Science and Technology. Relations between this institution and the University have become rather strained since the Polytechnic rejected a proposal by the University to validate its degree course in Micro-Electronics (in return for use by the Faculty of Engineering of some of the Polytechnic laboratory resources) in favour of offering its own degree under the C.N.A.A.

There are six Faculties in the University: Arts, Science, Engineering, Social Sciences, Education and Law, and the strongest emphasis is at present on Science and Engineering. The Education Faculty has at present strong links with the area training organisations.

There is also a Graduate Business School which is part of the University but has separate premises, also in the City Centre, and tends to operate as a semi-independent unit.

Current Problems

The Faculty of Arts has a very poor staff/student ratio by comparison with national average, particularly in History and Modern Languages. The Faculty of Engineering, by contrast, has a very good staff/student ratio although this picture is distorted by the presence of the Departments of Ship Technology and a Railway Engine Design Unit, both of which are largely postgraduate oriented.

The future of the Faculty of Education, following publication of the Government White Paper, is in some doubt, particularly since there are no teacher-training colleges of viable size within reasonable range of the existing University campus.

The housing situation for students is grisly and the University is wrestling with loan finance. The problem is particularly bad because the University did not get in on the bandwagon for UGC-funded residences early enough in its career, and is now suffering from the change of Government policy on this front.

Student recruitment is satisfactory, likewise academic staff recruitment, but the effect of the curious employment situation in the area is making it difficult to get technicians, and matters are made even more complicated by the presence of a dedicated Union leader who is a member of the ASTMS and who has succeeded in recruiting to his Union a substantial number of Postgraduate Students.

The University is currently wrestling with the interpretation of its quinquennial settlement which presents considerable problems in view of the UGC's emphasis on development in the Arts and the overall worsening of student unit costs.

University Officers:

The Secretary Responsible under the Vice-Chancellor for all administrative matters in the University. The Committee Secretariat and Personnel Departments report directly to him.

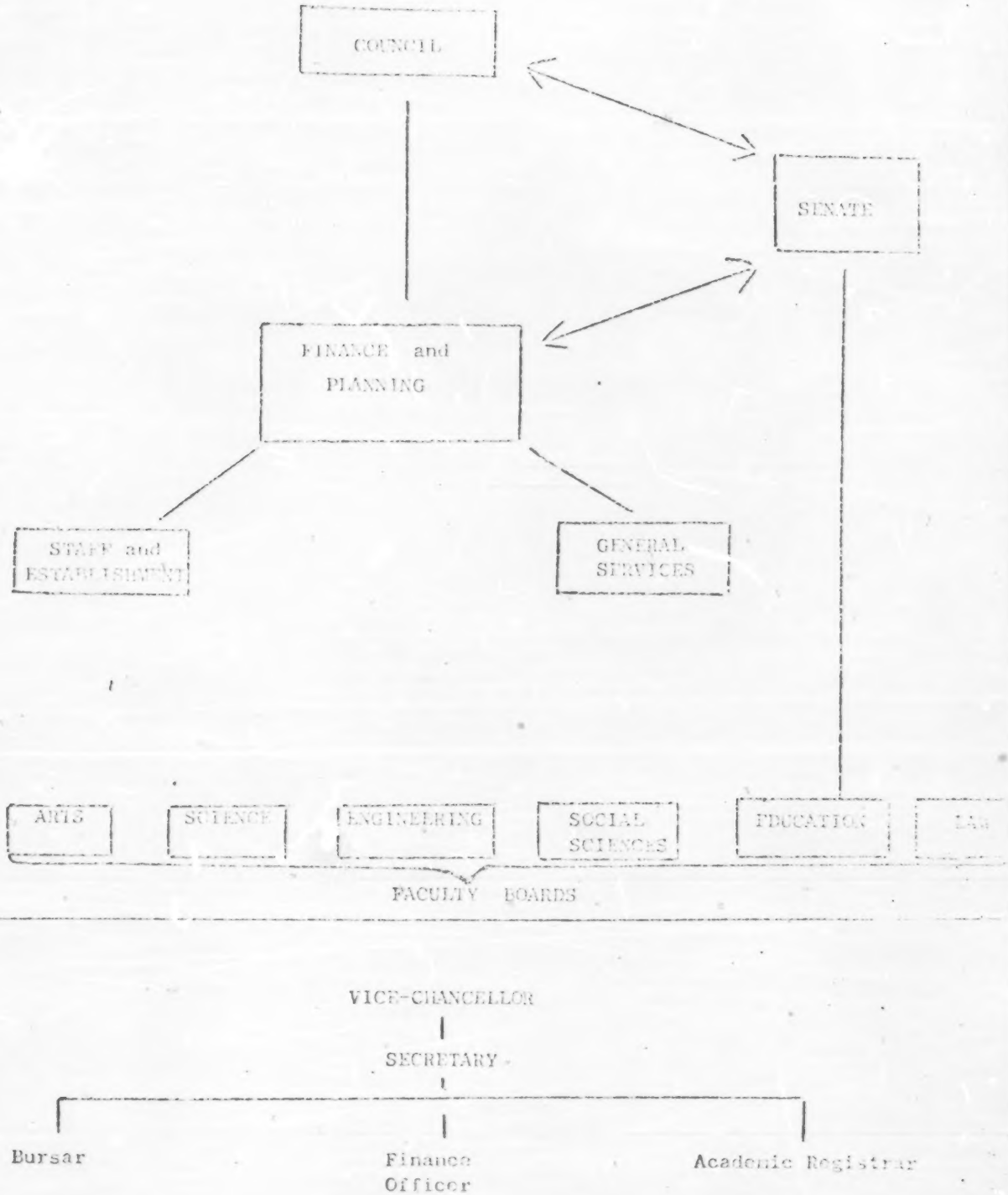
The Bursar Responsible for all general services including supervision of design and construction of new buildings, and maintenance of existing properties and plant, portering, cleaning and telephone services.

The Finance Officer Responsible for all finance matters including provision of advice and assistance on wage and salary matters to the Personnel Department.

The Academic Registrar Responsible for all academic matters.

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

Committee Structure



IEM A

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

Memorandum

To: Academic Registrar

From: Head of Department of Electronics

Date: 31 May 1973

Advertising of First-Degree Courses

I enclose a letter which I have received from the Careers Research and Advisory Bureau. I imagine that other Heads of Departments will have received similar letters. This is obviously a University rather than a Departmental matter and I hope we can take it up at the next Senate meeting. It seems nonsense that we should be bound by the CVCP's gentlemans agreement which other institutions are not.

Professor P.G. Thickett

From: Academic Registrar to Vice-Chancellor

I shall be grateful for your views on this one. We cannot unilaterally break the agreement with impunity but Prof. Thickett's view is understandable since the Polytechnic I gather are proposing to take a full page spread in COURSE-FISHING for their Micro-Electronics course.

CAREERS
RESEARCH AND ADVISORY
BUREAU

C R A B
CAMBRIDGE
Telephones: 99799
four lines

Dear Professor Thickett

I am writing to you to introduce a new annual publication which is to be published in July of this year to coincide with GCE A-level results.

The book - entitled COURSE-FISHING - will provide information for A-level students who either fail to achieve the standard required to enter the university of their choice, or who had not given adequate thought to degree course application at the appropriate time. It will therefore be read by many A-level students who may be in a position to apply for a first degree course you have to offer.

The only source of relevant information at this time of the year apart from LAO's and the national and local press will be COURSE-FISHING. Should you wish to provide information about your courses you can do so in COURSE-FISHING's Courses Vacancies section at a very reasonable cost.

The unique aspect of this publication is its distribution, which in the majority of cases is direct to the homes of A-level school leavers whose names are already being supplied by schools. In the two weeks following explanation of this project to schools, we have had requests for over 15,000 copies. It is expected that the final circulation will be in excess of 35,000, most copies being posted individually. In addition to direct delivery, supplies of the publication will be made available to Local Advisory Officers and schools.

I should very much like to discuss this project with you, as I feel that it will be of great use to you.

Yours sincerely

William Fisher

Director
I. Seymour-legge, M.A.

Manager
N. Boddie

Council
C.P. Trews OBE (Chairman)
D.D. McGrew
Ann O'Niemus M.A.
Sir John General

The Careers Research and Advisory Bureau (CRAB) Limited is an independent non-profit-making body, incorporated under the Companies Act, 1948, and entered in the Register of Charities in accordance with the provisions of Section 4 of the Charities Act, 1960.

EM B

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

Message to Academic Registrar from his Secretary

Dr. Jenkins, Secretary of the Board of Examiners for the M.Sc. in Automation Engineering, has asked if the attached paper could be considered by Senate at its next meeting. You may remember that the question of awarding the M.Sc. with Distinction was discussed by Senate several years ago when it was felt that the introduction of awards of distinction would devalue the M.Sc. as a higher degree. Since then a number of M.Sc. Boards of Examiners have expressed the view that the matter should be re-examined.

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

DEPARTMENT OF AUTOMATION ENGINEERING

Proposal for the introduction of Awards of Distinction in the M.Sc. Course in Automation Engineering

Experience in assessing students attending the M.Sc. Course in Automation Engineering has shown that there is often a wide spread in their written examination marks and substantial differences in the quality of their research dissertations. At the upper end of the range there are students with excellent examination results and who have produced dissertations of considerable merit making a significant contribution to the research of the department. Students at the lower end of the range have only just scraped through their written papers and have only just done enough in their research project to warrant a pass mark. Hence, there is a considerable spread in the abilities of the students who have passed the course. However, under the present award scheme, all students who pass the course receive the same classification of M.Sc. degree. Because of this there is evidence to suggest that some students of high ability are not completely pulling their weight giving just sufficient effort to pass the examinations knowing that any extra effort will make no difference to the standard of their degree.

Consequently it is proposed that awards of distinction should be given to suitable students who pass the course. To achieve this award it is suggested that the student should have attained an A in the research project and a high average mark ($\geq 70\%$) in the written examinations. Only students of exceptional ability would receive the award. A survey of past examination results since the start of the M.Sc. course in 1966 show that only one student exceeded this standard. However some other students would probably have made the extra effort to obtain this standard if they had had the opportunity of receiving a mark of distinction.

It is felt that such an award would enhance the value of the M.Sc. by giving an added incentive to the students. This will also improve the standard of research performed in the university. Unlike the Ph.D or M.Phil student, a M.Sc. students thesis is not published as being available outside the university and, because the research project is performed over a shorter period of time which often means that the project is not completed by a single student, an excellent M.Sc. research project is not necessarily published in the technical literature. Hence, whereas the evidence of an excellent Ph.D student is available for all to observe through his thesis and publications, the evidence of an excellent M.Sc. student is not as available, except through personal references. The award of a distinction would correct this situation.

The university would not be setting a precedent by awarding distinctions to exceptional M.Sc. students. The University of London has been awarding M.Sc. degrees with distinction for some time.

ITEM C

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

Message for Secretary from Academic Registrar

The President of the Students Union came in with the attached document. He would be glad if this can be put on the agenda for the next meeting of Senate. I see that the document says that the Faculty of Social Science has passed a resolution effectively supporting the students' demands but we have not received any official notification of this as yet.

UNIVERSITY OF DARSET

Students Union Society

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION ON SENATE AGENDA

It is proposed that all reserved areas on all University Committees and Boards of Studies agendas be abolished.

The Students Union Society deplores Senate's present regulations and feels that its student representatives can contribute to those items at present discussed under "reserved areas" and that, with regard to most of the items discussed, student opinion is essential.

The following motion was passed unanimously at the Union Meeting held on 13th March:-

> "This Union Society deplores the present Senate regulations regarding "reserved areas" on Boards of Study and University Committee Agendas. This Union Society feels that students can contribute to those items discussed under "reserved areas" and feels that student opinion is essential with regard to most of the items discussed.
>
> This Union Society recognises the need for confidentiality in certain cases and feels that its representatives can responsibly accept the onus of confidentiality when necessary.
>
> This Union Society therefore calls on its representatives on all University Committees and Boards of Studies to submit proposals for the abolition of "reserved areas" from agendas."

The Student Union Academic Committee, consisting of all university committee and Boards of Study reps. met on several occasions and discussed the item in great depth before submitting the above motion to the Student Union.

The Faculty Board of the Faculty of Social Science also passed a proposal requesting Senate to abolish reserved areas on all future Board agendas.

The students feel they are being excluded purely for confidential reasons but, as stated in the motion, the representatives believe they can accept the onus of confidentiality when necessary.

Students feel they can usefully contribute to most of the items at present discussed under reserved areas and that their exclusion is unnecessary.

We have been reminded that "there is nothing to hide in reserved areas" - why then can they not be abolished.

ITEM D.

GRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

To: Secretaries of Boards of Studies cc. Academic Registrar

From: Secretary, Board of Studies
in Management Studies

REVISED HIGHER DEGREES REGULATIONS: PUBLISHED PAPERS

At a meeting of the Board of Studies in Management Studies held on 26th July 1972 an item concerning the revision of Higher Degrees Regulations was discussed.

It would appear that the regulations governing the award of higher degrees to members of academic staff have been changed to the detriment of the staff and the university.

The original draft regulations allowed staff members to submit either a thesis or published works for the award of a higher degree.

This has been changed to exclude the second possibility.

Two implications appear to have been overlooked in making this alteration. The first is that a number of members of staff have been devoting their research effort to a collection of high level papers, rather than a thesis, in the belief that by so doing they were making themselves eligible for consideration for the award of a higher degree. Secondly, in some disciplines of study it is advantageous, both to the staff member and the work of his department, for him to apply research technique over a series of fields. This is particularly important in areas such as certain social sciences, management and business.

Members of the Board felt that

(a) the original regulations should be re-instated;

(b) in any case, the opinion of the separate Boards of Studies should have been sought before the change was made.

In the ultimate there may be a case for separate regulations for differing disciplines.

You may feel this is a matter of interest to your own Board.

John Thorpe
Secretary,
Board of Studies in Management Studies

ITEM E

UNIVERSITY OF BARSET

From: Dean of Faculty of Arts To: Vice-Chancellor

I have just received the Minutes of the Finance and Planning Committee and, scanning through them quickly, I cannot find a minuting of the point that Professor Tedfern and I expressly asked to be minuted which related to the position of the Photocopying Unit and the Language Laboratory. We were certainly doing much more than "expressing appreciation of their valuable work" when we made the comments that we did. We both stated that both facilities were severely understaffed and were only able to carry out the enormous demands on their services through the dedication of the present staff who were grossly over-worked. We expressed the opinion that the University had for some time been imposing on the good will of the people concerned to a quite unforgivable degree.

Please can this be added to the Minutes in a suitable form when they come up for confirmation. I have sent a copy of this note to Professor Tedfern who may well wish to amend the wording in some way. Perhaps you should check with him also.

From: Vice-Chancellor To: Secretary

I think the Dean is making an unnecessary fuss about this. We really can't have everybody's comments recorded verbatim in the minutes. Please see if you can pacify him so that the whole matter does not have to be raised again at our next meeting.

PANGOBOLA HIGH COMMISSION

793 Harley Street,
London.

Dear Vice-Chancellor,

Return of Pangobolan Students in the United Kingdom

I am writing once again to seek your co-operation in the preparation of a register of all Pangobolan students undertaking studies at Institutions of Higher Education in the United Kingdom during the current academic year. This return is most useful to my Commission in assessing the likely demand for student grants during the next three years and also assists us in keeping in touch with our countrymen while they are overseas.

I shall therefore be most grateful if you will arrange for the enclosed form to be completed for your University, giving details of all Pangobolan nationals among your students with particulars of their course, year of study and present address.

With many thanks for your continued co-operation,

Yours, etc.

First Secretary for Cultural Affairs

Note from Vice-Chancellor To: Secretary

I discover with some concern that this return has been completed every year since Pangobola achieved independence. In view of the recent military coup and the new government's reaction to student dissidents we must certainly consider whether we should continue to do so.

NB. We've got to tread carefully in view of the High Commissioner's tentative offer to finance the next Hall of Residence.